

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 1-12 have been amended.

Claims 13-18 have been added.

Support for the amendment of Claim 1 is provided by Claims 1 and 2, page 2, lines 12-13, and page 6, lines 2-6. The amendment of Claims 2-12 are supported by the corresponding claims as originally filed. New Claims 13-18 are supported by Claims 1 and 2, page 2, lines 12-13, and page 6, lines 2-6.

No new matter is believed to be entered by the present amendments.

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 are pending in the present application.

Applicants wish to thank Examiner Nguyen for the helpful and courteous discussion with their undersigned Representative on January 17, 2008. During the discussion, various amendments and arguments were discussed to obviate and/or address the outstanding rejections. The content of this discussion is believed to be reflected in the amendments and remarks set forth herein. Applicants request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections.

The rejection of Claims 1-12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP 57-118017 in view of Yamanaka et al (U.S. 6,653,212) is obviated by amendment.

Applicants make no statement with respect to the propriety of this ground of rejection and in no way acquiesce to the same. Indeed, Applicants disagree with the Examiner's alleged obviousness based on the graphite heating element. Nonetheless, to expedite examination of this application, Applicants have amended independent Claim 1 to more specifically define the heating element as being composed of a metal or metal alloy selected from the group consisting of tungsten, niobium, tantalum, an alloy comprising tungsten, an alloy comprising niobium, and an alloy comprising tantalum. In addition, Applicants have amended Claim 1 to include an additional step of (a) fractionating or at least partially condensing the product mixture produced by the reaction induced by heating or (b) passing the product stream from said reaction as starting material to a direct further use (see page 6, lines 1-9).

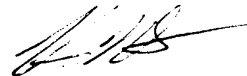
Applicants submit that neither JP 57-118017 nor Yamanaka et al (U.S. 6,653,212) disclose or suggest the claimed method including the specific combination of limitations above that have been added to Claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this ground of rejection.

Applicants submit that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Early notification of such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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